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ABSTRACT

This discussion paper provides background information on credentialing, raises issues in the area of credentialing for out-of-school time programs, and suggests the important decisions that need to evolve in the out-of-school time field. The first part of the paper defines credentials, describes traditional and changing concepts of credentialing and professionalism, and outlines how a career development approach differs from credentialism. This section also examines the elements of credentialing systems (content, access, infrastructure), discusses which credentialed roles would create a career pathway, and suggests some reasons why out-of-school time providers and programs, and the government, might find credentials to be of value. The remainder of the paper explores how the topic of credentials relates to compensation by offering some sample policies and recommendations for further discussion by members of the out-of-school time field. The paper notes that: (1) creating the elements of a credential is a long-term process; (2) credentialing is a compensation strategy, but it does not stand alone as the solution; and (3) credentialing adds a whole new level of actions for the field to take in addition to the ones identified in the past. Contains 18 references. (EV)

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Credentialing in Out-of-School Time Programs

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Credentialing in Out-of-School Time Programs

More than 30 years ago, a feature story appeared in the *New York Times* that exemplifies some of the issues members of the out-of-school time[1] field will encounter as they move forward to professionalize the field. The story featured a spectacularly successful summer playground director in New York City. Under the director's leadership, the number of children who came to the playground increased dramatically and far exceeded the enrollment in other playground programs around the city. Unfortunately, the director was fired because he did not have a college degree qualifying him to direct a recreational program. His background was unusual. For a number of years, he had worked as a clown in a circus, and before that he was a sailor in the Merchant Marines.

This director's story reminds us that conflict can arise between setting standards for a field and quality. There are multiple avenues to developing talent for the out-of-school time field. In many instances, children and youth themselves, rather than the formal educational credentials of the director or the setting, will determine a program's success. This paper will provide some background information on credentialing, will raise some issues, and suggest the important decisions that need to evolve in the out-of-school time field.

All About Credentials

In the first part of this paper, I define credentials, describe traditional and changing concepts of credentialing and professionalism, and outline how a career development approach differs from credentialism. In this section, I also examine the elements of credentialing systems, discuss what credentialed roles would create a career pathway, and suggest some reasons why out-of-school time providers and programs, and the government, might find credentials to be of value.

In the remainder of this paper, I explore how the topic of credentials relates to compensation and conclude by offering some sample policies and recommendations for further discussion by members of the out-of-school time field.

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[1]In this paper, *school-age care* (or SAC) is used to describe programs for children from age five to age 12, regularly enrolled, and usually licensed or licensed exempt. The term *youth development* is used to describe programs geared to youths from age 10-16, 17, 18. The term *out-of-school time* is used to refer to the entire field and includes: SAC programs; youth development programs; and all programs run by parks and recreation, churches, libraries, and youth groups that are typically drop-in or less than full-time and might focus on mentoring, tutoring, sports, and/or enrichment.

What is a Credential?

The Heritage Dictionary defines the word *credential* in two ways. A credential is that which entitles one to confidence, credit, or authority. Credentials are evidence or testimonials concerning one's right to credit, confidence, or authority. The word comes from the Latin word credentia, which means trust. Medieval Latin evolved the word *credentialia* meaning "giving authority." For our purposes, the key idea is that a credential enables us to know that the person filling a role is qualified to carry it out, and that we can trust that person to have the requisite knowledge and skills.

The same dictionary defines the word *credentialism* as an overemphasis on diplomas or degrees in giving jobs or conferring social status. This overemphasis is obviously a pitfall the field will want to avoid.

In this paper, the term *credentialing* is used to refer to the awarding of any certificate, permit, or other document which certifies that an individual has mastered a specific set of defined skills and knowledge and has demonstrated competencies to perform a role or different roles in out-of-school time programs. A credential may be awarded by a professional association, state agency, higher education consortium, or other organization with a legitimate interest in the qualifications of individuals working in the field, and signifies a consensus by those groups of the validity of the standards set forth.

Over the next five years, while groups are experimenting, credentials might take several different forms. The Army has developed a credential for school-age care (SAC) personnel, at a level similar to the Child Development Associate, which will clearly influence state policies. The competencies in this credential are based on those in the training program *Caring for Children in School-Age Programs* by Diane Trister-Dodge of Teaching Strategies. The work of the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative in three cities, Seattle, Boston, and Chicago, has provided a great deal of useful thinking on which to build as MOST enters its next phase (Esposito & Costley, 1997).

Chicago concentrated on the content of the credential: the competencies, including knowledge and skills, that practitioners need in this field. They studied and compared the competencies for a group leader in the *Caring for Children in School-Age Programs* training program with those identified for the training of youth development workers. Boston worked on a beginning curriculum for training group leaders. Also, with a Higher Education Consortium of 19 representatives of two- and four-year colleges, they developed five courses and a mentoring program. Washington State Child Care Career Subcommittee developed core competencies on which a credential could be based. And, the Seattle MOST group developed a certificate program and is working on articulation issues. By now, the MOST cities have discussed all these approaches and are ready to move forward to take steps to implement a credential or multiple credentials for the field.

Changing Concepts of Credentialing

MOST is developing a credential during a period in which there has been great change, and in which there will be more shifts, in concepts of credentialing. For example, the "status line" dividing those with the credential from non-credentialed people is altering. Years ago, there was a distinction between professions and occupations that were not professions. This distinction meant that two classes of people worked in programs: professionals, who got credentials before entering the field, and "workers" who entered without credentials and would never become credentialed. In older professions, the work would be divided up, and often direct care for children was considered an occupation, not a profession. This conceptualization was, and still is, common in residential programs for youth and certain health programs.

More recently, a concept emerged of professional and paraprofessional personnel. As a "paraprofessional," a lower-status worker could be permitted to carry out certain tasks previously considered only appropriate for professionals. However, they remained lower-status workers in contrast to professionals, and they were not expected to become professionals. This was a transitional concept. Today, the career development approach is gradually replacing the idea of paraprofessionalism. Occupational training often carries college credit and articulates to degree programs. Those in entry and assisting roles have the opportunity to receive training while employed that enables them to become professionals.

College training for the already-employed does not replace pre-service training; it offers another route, a bridge over which all can cross. Everybody who works in a program might be on a track in which training while employed is pre-service training for the next role. The Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training is sponsoring a Quality Child Care Initiative which will expand its current Child Development Specialist Registered Apprenticeship program. The creation of a lifelong career track is at the heart of the program. The existing apprenticeship model in West Virginia combines training based on the 13 functional areas of the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with on-the-job observation and practice. Participants receive 33 credits that they can then apply toward a 64-credit associate's degree. Currently, 500 registered apprentices are employed and receiving training, and 300 apprentices have graduated to become Child Development Specialists (United States Department of Labor, 1998). As out-of-school time programs expand, one promising avenue to pursue might be the establishment of an apprenticeship model designed specifically for roles in the field.

At the same time that the career development approach is gaining in popularity, there is a worldwide trend toward broader job mobility. Looking at welfare reform, it is clear to planners that we will not be able to help families become self-sustaining by getting them into low-wage, dead-ended jobs. The questions for society are: Are jobs available? Will welfare recipients be able to compete for the available jobs? How much will the jobs pay? How difficult will it be to move up the job ladder?

According to one study, "The long-term prospects of those on welfare will depend on their ability to move up the economic ladder. Many workers in low-wage jobs do, indeed, move up into steady and better-paying employment, often do so relatively rapidly, and usually remain in a good job thereafter. This suggests that significant opportunities to move up continue to exist in the low-wage labor market as a whole...Although many workers in low-wage jobs do move up the economic ladder, another large segment of low-wage workers remain in such jobs for extended periods with little or no increase in pay" (McMurrer, Sawhill, & Lerman, 1998).

Training and career paths need to help entry-level workers move into better paying jobs, through supervised work and training, as well as providing pre-service professional preparation for those who wish to enter the field at a higher level. For that reason, the vision of credentialing is not for just a single credential, like the Child Development Associate (CDA), or a teacher certificate, or a particular college degree, but a planned, articulated system of credentials, linked to compensation, that enables members of a field to move out of dead-end, low-paying jobs and enter jobs previously limited to those who received their education prior to employment. Already-existing credentials need to be identified, linked up to new credentials, and built into a broader system with wider options (VanderVen, 1992, 1994).

As we look at what different kinds of work have in common, it will become more and more evident that upward mobility across the child care, youth, health, and other fields is important. Those who enter the field as apprentices, even if not called that, could have greater opportunity to move into more responsible roles if we broaden our thinking to possible alternative pathways across fields (Pindus, Dyer, Ratcliffe, Trutko, & Isbell, 1998). Since jobs in out-of-school time programs are often part-time, and frequently blended with other jobs, this is a very promising field for combined preparation for cross-disciplinary roles.

A Brief History of Professions

Credentials are strongly associated with professions. The growth of professions in the 19th century coincided with a rising middle class with economic and social power, made possible by the development of industry. Professionalism, like business, was a powerful avenue for upward mobility in a previously stratified fixed class system (Larson, 1977).

In the 19th century, the American college had been organized on the assumption that higher learning constituted a single unified culture—a goal of producing a learned person. The new 20th century university replaced this model with autonomous departments driven by scientific research within boundaries of the specialized discipline and its sub-specializations. There were great gains from this educational system in scientific achievement, preparation for employment, and access to women and minorities. The cost has been a narrowing of focus and a vocabulary shared only by colleagues (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985).

Equity of Access

Opportunity for social advancement, based on individual effort and ability, has been a key value in the United States. As formal schooling became a part of the paradigm of professionalism, replacing the older apprenticeship system, equity of social opportunity through professionalism became tied to equity of access to college. A profession determines who gets access to the knowledge, through entrance standards for certificate and degree programs, length of study, and requirements for degrees (Hughes, 1965). This country's strong commitment to social mobility has, therefore, been tied to its commitment to access to higher education.

To the extent that access to college is limited for those who have talent and ability that could be developed, access to professions and to social mobility is limited. Without access, the dream of equal opportunity is flawed, and credentialism becomes a barrier to social mobility and equal opportunity. Entrance barriers, social class, availability of scholarships, education offered during non-work hours, support services, and location of education all affect access.

The Public's View of Professions

To a certain extent, credentials confer authority on professionals, but only if recognized by the public. Because authority is granted to professionals by those they serve, it is important to try to sense how the public views professions as the twenty-first century approaches. Experts may disagree, but, in the end, it will be the public's view that determines whether the old characteristics continue to define a profession, whether a new paradigm develops, or whether occupations are no longer judged professional or not professional, except by some lay concept of dedication.

Currently, the positive words that appear to be associated with professions in the public eye include dedicated, committed, expert, and businesslike. These are words that can be, and often are, applied to any individual in any occupation. Some of the most respected professions have lost status in the eyes of members of the public, including lawyers and doctors. The climate of receptiveness toward professionalism in the general society will be modified by consumerism and multiculturalism. In 1998, both our society and its professionals have ceased to embrace the goal of absolute power by the professional over the user of the service.

The general public also rejects any status gap between parents and professionals as a concept in public policy. The national education Goal Number 1, that all children should arrive at school ready to learn, stresses parents as first teachers, rather than professionalism, as a guiding principle in policies for children.

Much of the public's anti-elitism and anger stems from their perception of illegitimacy of authority. Many citizens feel that:

- professionals impose solutions on the public;
- the knowledge base may not be relevant or necessary to the solution of the problems;
- experts have lost touch with the common wisdom;

- the motivation for the elite is self-aggrandizement rather than the common good; and
- access to income, security, and social class status enjoyed by the professional in a precarious economy is not a fair process open to anyone.

To the extent that these perceptions have any validity, they will undermine or change the future of professions.

A Changing Paradigm

As credentialing begins to be developed for those who work in out-of-school time programs, the policy environment is very different from that of a century ago. Of all the characteristics traditionally associated with professions, a few appear to have been completely jettisoned. Other characteristics are either on their way to extinction or may be greatly modified. A few may still retain their power and importance.

Those characteristics that appear to be still strongly supported by society worldwide are:

- the importance of college credit, which serves as a kind of currency that gives continuing value to the learning that an individual has experienced; and
- the importance of service and a high degree of dedication in the way work is performed.

Those characteristics that appear to be dead, if not buried, are the following.

- The professional/client relationship (in which the client places trust in the professional because the client does not have the knowledge to evaluate the service) is rapidly disappearing. Something closer to a customer relationship, in which the customer's own definition of needs and problems is given greater credence, is taking its place.

- The earlier idea of a professional calling, characterized by service to the community and often low compensation, has been largely rejected. To some degree, this concept has been replaced by a career approach. The goal is no longer the fulfillment of a commonly valued life of service, but the attainment of "success" (Bellah, et. al., 1985).

- In the future, the exclusive control of any profession over entry into roles is unlikely to be fully supported through public regulatory power. The reliance of the public on professionals' codes of ethics is being replaced by consumer protection measures.

Other characteristics of professions appear to be undergoing rapid change. Some of them, too, may be approaching extinction.

- The narrowness of separate, specialized professional frameworks is being replaced by a strong movement toward interprofessional communication and helping. Professionalism is increasingly centered on the needs expressed by the families and children/youth using the programs, rather than the needs as diagnosed from the fragmented perspectives of separate specialists.

- The rigid and permanent social class distinction between professional education and vocational education has disappeared. Entry-level training for those in assisting roles is now seen by many as an earlier stage of preparation, which can later become a part of the extensive formal education required for more responsible roles.

- The knowledge explosion is influencing the previous view of a fixed amount of knowledge monopolized by a profession. The skill of seeking and finding information may now be more important than any other competency.

- The idea of distance from the client is being modified by the idea of caring.

- The autonomy of the professional is modified by the fact that many professionals are based in organizational structures.

Career Development Approach in Contrast to Credentialism

The career development, or professional development, approach takes a modern view of professionalism. While promoting milestone credentials and lifelong professional growth, it is not credentialist. Some of the differences between the modern career development approach and credentialism are:

1. ***In a credentialist approach, the individual enters a professional preparation program in a college, with the end goal of getting a specific credential***. This credential will define her/him as a "professional" and separate her/him from those who are not professionals. In a ***career development approach***, it is accepted that some individuals experience a gradual unfolding of intentionality in which they formulate their career goals while employed in a field, rather than declaring their intent upon entry into a four-year institution or graduate school.

   Intentionality unfolds differently for those who have been brought up to believe that they will go to college and those who haven't. In many cases, individuals must pass closer milestones, such as a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate's degree, before feeling ready to pursue further degrees. Often they will arrive at an advanced degree and a respected professional status, but they will go about it in a more gradual way, without initially declaring their intention to earn an advanced degree.

2. ***In a credentialist approach, professionals are separated from non-professionals by a permanent social class division***. In a ***career development approach***, all staff members are on a professional track, assistants are able to become teachers, teachers will become master teachers, and directors can be drawn from this progression.

3. ***The career development approach stresses access to credit-bearing training so that people can apply their training to get milestone credentials***. Credit-bearing training is vital for any field in which many receive their college educations after employment. The career

development approach emphasizes the importance of granting credit for any high quality substantial training. Second-class training, or a second-class credential, is not acceptable for anyone. Credits and early credentials become points of recognition rather than a terminal credential. The ***career development approach*** doesn't recognize any credential as terminal, stressing lifelong education and career growth. Salary strategies, however, are linked to levels of qualifications.

4. ***The career development approach stresses the central importance of diversity among those who work with diverse children/youth and their families***. Quality for children/youth requires that they can see members of their own culture in positions of power and status in the programs they attend. Otherwise, the program itself undermines their hopes for their own futures.

   With the wide range of children/youth served by out-of-school time programs, it is essential to assure a diverse pool of teachers and directors. At present, the minority population groups are greatly underrepresented in leadership roles in the early care and education field (National Black Child Development Institute, 1993). Data from Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project (Equip) suggest that SAC programs in one of the MOST projects employ staff that more closely match the enrolled children, in contrast to public schools and child care centers (Boston Equip, 1997). It will be important not to let ***credentialism*** destroy that aspect of the programs.

5. ***Reforms in the credentialist system require changes, but not quite as major and not quite as structural as the reforms pursued by the career development groups***. For the latter, knowledge is a lifelong process that is increasingly interprofessional and stresses caring relationships as at least as important than the rational/scientific approaches to cognitive knowledge that characterized the end of the 19th and most of the 20th century.

   The career development approach does not supplant traditional, pre-service college education, but it expands participants to include the already-employed as well. There is great value in building a career system in which many practitioners were once entry-level assistants. Direct supervised work with children/youth and families makes a sturdy foundation for professional growth, not only for providers, teachers, and directors, but also for careers in the health and social service fields that currently emphasize only pre-service training.

A credential with an emphasis on career development entails:

1. ***An agreed-upon body of core knowledge and competencies***. MOST has already begun, and will continue, to define common elements across youth development programs and SAC programs, identifying coherent concepts that are developmentally appropriate for each of the different age groups who participate in out-of-school time programs.

2. ***College credit for any level of the credential***. Training should "count" (i.e., be applicable to the next level). A person should not have to start over when they enter a college program. Levels of college need to articulate.

3. ***Some clout***. Somebody, somewhere, should have authority to say that the credential is required for some purpose. For example, the licensing agency could require that all group leaders be credentialed, or it could call for every program to have at least one credentialed group leader. If it is not politically feasible for the licensing agency to make the credential mandatory, it could be a funding requirement ("To receive state and federal dollars, programs must employ x percent of credentialed staff..."). The credential could be a standard for accreditation imposed by the National School-Age Care Association (NSACA). Or, an individual program could voluntarily decide to require credentials. If there is no clout, fewer people will seek the credential. However, a voluntary credential has value, and might be sought for a variety of reasons (see page 12). Over time, clout may build around a voluntary credential.

The Elements of Creating a Credentialing System

As the century is about to turn, credentialing is becoming a focus for the out-of-school time field. Two factors may have delayed the field from developing a credential. First, leaders in the field recognized many paths, and did not want to set up credentialist barriers. Second, public education already certifies the role of teacher of this age group, and colleges have assumed there was no need for a different professional group.

Nationally, very little training has been available specific to the competencies of those who work in out-of-school time programs. An important task for the present is, therefore, to identify the competencies needed for this work and compare them with the competencies built into teaching certificates and college programs.

Assembling the necessary ingredients to make credentialing work is a long process. Fortunately, groups that are working on creating credentials can benefit from one another's learnings through MOST. There is no pre-determined sequence in which the process must be conducted; some groups will be working on some elements, while others will focus on other components.

According to the work of the *Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century* initiative, the work on creating these elements can be organized into three aspects: content, access, and infrastructure:

Content

Work on content is important to higher education initiatives. The fundamental knowledge and the basic competencies that all credentialed practitioners should have form the content of the credential. Once this content is identified and agreed upon, it can become the foundation for training at all levels, spiraling to greater depth at more advanced degrees. If the field identifies

the content, this work can heavily influence what is offered in higher education and can become the basis for evaluation of training in related fields.

In Chicago, the MOST group worked on an analysis of the content of training for those who work with young school-age children (Koralek, Newman, & Colker, 1995) and for youth workers (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1993). The curriculum for group leaders' training in SAC programs for young school-age children shares a recognized theoretical base with child development and early childhood education. The youth development curriculum has developed in the field of practice, in programs for older youth.

The Chicago MOST group found that the content of the two kinds of training was very similar despite the different age groups served. If infused with a developmental approach, and attuned to the differing needs of the stages of human development represented by young school-age children, middle school-age children, and teenagers, it makes sense that the two could be brought together to address gaps in, and improve, both streams.

A few examples of valuable content for an SAC/out-of-school time credential follow:

- ***Group work***. The Chicago MOST group found that the youth development curriculum devoted time and emphasis to group work, while the curriculum for younger school-age children did not. Even at the preschool level, one of the important skills for a teacher is facilitating the development of a group, a supportive community of children.

- ***Caring***. The concept of caring is often missing from much of the curricula for school teachers and teachers of younger children. Obviously, this concept is of fundamental importance in care and education for children of any age, and its value is reinforced by recent research, which finds that brain development comes through relationships. With the support of the Lilly Foundation, important work on caring has been done in the youth development field (Sullivan & Ward, 1992). This concept must be part of the core knowledge of all of those who work in out-of-school time programs.

- ***Diversity***. All personnel need to fully understand issues of diversity as they work with diverse groups of children/youth and their families, market their programs to the children/youth of the community, collaborate to support families in the community, and seek to create a sense of community among a diverse staff.

One major difference between out-of-school time programs and those for younger children is the fact that school-age children's and youths' perceptions of the program will determine whether they enroll. School-age children and youths vote with their feet. Credentialed personnel must have the appropriate training to make the program satisfying and attractive to children and youths.

Access

Traditional college education has had a built-in tendency to favor the dominant group in society. If we hope to diversify our pools of personnel to match the diversity of our children/youths, and if we want to continue our creative search for talent of all kinds, there need to be strong antidotes to credentialism to counteract this tendency.

School-age children and youths spend a lot of time thinking about their future careers and their identities. They need to see members of their own communities in positions of power and status in the programs they use. This means it is of the utmost importance to:

- Recruit personnel from a wide range of cultural groups.
- Focus on mobility for aides and assistants to become group leaders, and beyond.
- Offer scholarship help and academic and personal supports.
- Assure that all training includes content on diversity, is taught by instructors who model what they teach, and is culturally relevant in content.

Infrastructure

MOST has begun to establish important linkages between schools, community-based programs for youth as well as younger school-age children, colleges, and decision-makers. In the work of the next phase, these relationships need to evolve into permanent stable supports for out-of-school time programs.

- ***Colleges*** in the area will offer credit-bearing training resulting in a credential. They will also develop an articulated career path from entry orientation through advanced degrees. They might even retrain credentialed teachers, so that a workforce of Department of Education-credentialed teachers with a school-age credential would be available for schools.

- ***Licensing of school-age programs*** will refer to the credential in some way. In some states, they might require the credential for some or all staff. In other states, the credential might be listed, with others, as one alternative acceptable preparation for the role or roles. These alternatives can then serve as a guide for salary policy that pays more for higher levels of education.

- ***State funders*** will pay more for accredited care, if certain staff qualifications are met.

- ***Accreditation and quality improvement support*** need to be built at the local level, with support for fees and facilitation from private and local sources.

- ***NSACA policies***. Accreditation could bring some teeth to credentialing in the future. For example, NSACA could require that all staff be credentialed by the time of the first re-accreditation. Or, NSACA could require a certain percentage of credentialed staff before a program could be accredited at all. A director credential could be an accreditation criterion.

- ***Career development, or professional development, groups***. An important help in the work toward a credential is the existence of career development or professional development groups in almost every state. These groups represent a wave of energy in support of the career development approach, working hard to implement the elements of a credential as described above. By joining forces with these groups, advocates for out-of-school time programs can greatly strengthen their own efforts and add new energy to the efforts of others.

As each group seeks to institutionalize its answer to each of the elements of a credentialing system, they will need to:

- create a career pathway of credentialed roles;
- identify a granting organization;
- establish a core body of knowledge and competencies;
- recruit and enroll participants;
- encourage ongoing professional relationships among participants;
- ensure the credential is accessible to all (i.e., financially within reach, geographically within reach, courses offered at convenient times and appropriately designed for adult learners);
- assure the credential does not bar access to leadership roles for members of underrepresented groups;
- develop criteria to apply to the applicants for the credential and devise a method of assessment;
- decide on any prerequisite training;
- determine the amount of coursework, content, theory applicable to professional responsibilities, and levels offered for each role;
- decide how the training will be delivered (i.e., courses at college, college courses in the community, distance learning);
- set guidelines for credit for prior learning experiences and devise a method of assessment;
- track candidates' training toward the credential;
- decide what changes to make in licensing and subsidy policy to encourage more credentialed staff and make plans to bring about those changes;
- formulate a clear picture of how the credential links to other forms of training and higher education (from certificate program, to associate's degree, to bachelor's degree, to graduate degree);
- establish follow-up requirements for renewal of the credential; and
- devise techniques to evaluate the efficacy of the training and the system.

What Credentialed Roles Would Create a Career Pathway?

It is important to address whether a credential should require any previous credential (add-on, endorsement, or prerequisite). In the out-of-school time field, states—and even programs within the same state—have a variety of names for the same role. Deciding which of these roles should be credentialed will be based on quality considerations and on compensation considerations. Programs might want to require a credential for group leaders, or require some credentialed

group leaders, in order to assure a reliable level of quality. Or, it might be decided to attach a credential to some roles in order to explain the need for increasing salaries for those roles. The following discussion of roles uses invented terminology in order to generalize.

A program might have aides, assistants, activity specialists, group leaders, group leaders/administrators, or coordinator roles. For discussion purposes, the following list describes how credentialing might be applied to these roles. For each role, it must be decided:

- Does anybody in this role have to have a credential?
- Does everybody in the role have to have the credential?
- Do programs have to employ a certain number or percentage of credentialed staff?
- Should the credential be offered at one level or at more than one level?

Aides and assistants—A basic orientation might be required (by licensing, funding source, accreditation, or the program itself) with standard recommended content. If so, this is a credential, at a very low level, certifying that a person has had the basic necessary orientation required before they can fill these entry-level roles. Those completing the orientation might be given a certificate. Orientation is not usually considered to be a credential, but it might be important for the out-of-school time field to require it either before employment, before assignment to tasks, or within a period of time after employment.

Activities Specialist—Peculiar to this field, some out-of-school time program staff members are employed because they have skills in another field (i.e., art, music, sports, and multiple other specializations). After spending some time in an out-of-school time program, a college student or other individual with talents and accomplishments in another field may leave to pursue a career in his/her specialty. A simple credential could be created that would consist of the basic orientation, plus evidence of knowledge and competency in the person's specialized field. The purpose of such a credential would be to lift salaries for this role a little, in order to attract talented individuals and to distinguish them from aides and assistants without a specialized skill.
Group Leader—This is the key career role, the person the program wants to keep over time. At what level is the credential? Options include:

- a national credential like CDA, equivalent to 9-12 credit hours of college work;
- a two-year degree;
- two levels, the second one a bachelor's or master's degree; and
- all levels. In this option, the national credential could define the core knowledge. This core knowledge, at different levels, would be built into associate's and bachelor's degrees. The level of college education could define the salary strategy (see Blended Careers below).

Group Leader/Administrator—For small programs, use of this role creates a full-time position for administrators who also work with children/youths, justifying full-time pay at a higher level. Group Leader/Administrators would have the group leader credential, plus an additional amount of training in administration, as an endorsement on the group leader credential, or as a separate credential. Full-time administrators might have the same, or a more demanding, credential.

Coordinator—There are some administrative positions with authority to oversee a number of different programs. All coordinators should have the group leader credential, plus some additional amount of training in administration. This might be another endorsement on the group leader credential, or it might be a separate credential.

Blended Careers—Most of the roles in the out-of-school time field are part-time roles, since children are in schools a major part of their time. The Group Leader/Administrator is made a full-time role by combining administrative and program responsibilities in the same person. A coordinator might be a full-time position in a large system. While the out-of-school time field ponders the professionalization of their work, we all need to remember that the group leader, who might be the key professional person, may have to blend this part-time role with another role, not always that of administrator. "An ingredient of professional development is for blended careers to be less makeshift and more the thoughtful product of a field trying to upgrade the quality of its jobs…Ideas for combinations of blended careers include: SAC and family/school liaison; SAC and youth work; SAC and early childhood education; SAC and home visiting; SAC and family support; SAC and teacher's aides. Many in the educational policy sphere envision a strong school-family-community triad and such schools (often called Schools of the 21st Century) will carry many more possibilities for blended careers as schools stay open all year and in the evenings, and play new roles in family and community life" (Hochberg, 1996). There is interest worldwide in combining careers, across education, health, and even residential administration. For the out-of-school time field, the need to blend careers is both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge: Can the group leader credential be so valuable that other fields would want to hire a credentialed group leader, even without additional training for the other job? Or should there be a blended credential?

The opportunity: Necessity is the mother of invention. The out-of-school time field, in the course of trying to create full-time jobs and professionalize roles, may invent creative training that prepares individuals for greater job mobility.

Why Providers, Programs, and the Government Might Value the Credential

Providers might value a credential because:

- It has value in the job market and might help them get a better-paying job.
- High quality programs might give preference to credentialed applicants.
- The competencies might be transferable to related fields.
- The content of the training would help them succeed and find more satisfaction in the work.
- The credential is a recognition of status and importance.
- It can help programs in their marketing of quality to funding sources.
- A funding source might encourage or require a credential, or at least prefer to fund programs with credentialed personnel.
- There is a trend in states to pay more for higher quality.

Programs might value a credential because:

- It could gain a reputation for producing excellent workers.
- It could reduce failure, crises, and disasters and improve quality.
- It would make a program more marketable to parents and funding sources.
- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies could list programs that have credentialed personnel.
- It could increase a program's ability to get bank loans, corporate support, foundation support, and government subsidy.
- It could help to secure insurance coverage at better terms.
- Excellent group leaders will attract children and youths and retain their participation.

The government might value, and ultimately require, a credential because:

- The credential offers access to leadership roles and to college credit to members of underrepresented groups.
- Competent directors and staff protect the investment of dollars by reducing failure and assuring operating at an effective level of quality.
- Director and staff competence correlate with quality outcomes for children and youths.
- Enrollment by children and youths would be more likely. The program would market itself to its young customers.

How the Topic of Credentials Relates to Compensation

Many in the human service field assume that compensation is a public awareness issue. In the early childhood field, which has a strong emphasis on psychology, there is a pervasive belief that the problem stems from the public's will to subsidize parents and parents' willingness to pay. The compensation issues in early childhood and out-of-school time programs are, however, complex economic issues. No single solution by itself is an answer.

One of the major issues in all forms of programs that offer care and education to children of all ages is the fact that salaries are low and turnover is high. Out-of-school time programs have two further complications regarding compensation. First, talented young staff members are often expected to leave as they pursue their careers in their own specialty fields. Secondly, much of the field's work is part-time and does not carry full-time salaries.

In the pages that follow, I describe the trilemma that faces out-of-school time programs, view supply and demand from an economic perspective, assess the current climate for credentials, and consider the effects of accreditation and mass accreditation. I conclude this section by offering a set of policies to improve compensation.

The Trilemma

The ***child care trilemma*** is an expression describing the budget issues at the micro economic level in this field. Three factors in a center budget form the trilemma, and these factors are difficult, if not impossible, for directors to balance:

1. ***Ratios*** (the number of children/youth per staff member) must be small enough to assure that the important relationships that children and youth need can be established and maintained at all times. That number will determine how many staff the director must recruit, employ, and supervise.
2. The ***salaries of the staff*** who work with the children and youths.
3. The ***amount that parents or government are willing and able to pay*** in fees.

Fix any two of the trilemma issues and you will destroy the third. Employ enough staff to respond to the needs of children and youth, and pay them what they deserve, and you will set a price that most parents cannot or will not pay and the government has been unwilling to pay. Set fees at a reasonable level for affordability, and pay staff what they deserve, and you will have far too many children/youths for responsive relationships with each other and with their leaders. Employ enough staff for high quality relationships, and set a price that parents can afford, and you will underpay the staff. It is this third trade-off that has been made for the past quarter century. The trilemma must be treated as a whole, balancing its three legs.

Supply/Demand from an Economic Perspective

The compensation issues faced by out-of-school time programs are even more complicated, because both compensation and supply relate to demand. As stated earlier, a school-age child or youth votes with her/his feet. No matter what community agency delivers the funds and the programs, demand is going to be strongly affected by the young customer. In addition to the trilemma, consumer choice enters into the picture strongly for out-of-school time programs. Effective demand is the major factor determining supply. The body of individuals who want and can pay for a program on their own, or with help, provides effective demand. A program will survive only if there is someone who wants, and can afford, the program. Affordability alone will not create supply for these age groups; the programs must attract children and youths. Supply arises to meet effective demand. Where there is effective demand, labor shortages result in increased wages.

Compensation issues will not be solved by public education or awareness alone. Quality is important and, in this case, if quality is in the eye of the beholder, the beholder is a young school-age child or youth. Child demand will affect the economics of out-of-school time programs. For salaries to increase, qualified staff must be in demand. Accreditation may help to create such a demand.

Current Climate for Credentials

There is strong opposition to credentialing among many policy-makers. Mandatory credentials are seen as artificial raising of prices by a vested interest. At this point in history, a new group is not likely to get state support to restrict entry into the field. Credentialist elitism is not supported by state action.

The public in general supports linking salaries to college credit, still pursuing the American dream of upward mobility through higher education. Policy for the year 2000 would be a concept of linking salary to level of specialized education, by role. Child care centers now have a concept of salaries that reward longevity as well as specialized education (see Appendix A, example of a salary scale for teachers).

Playing this out, NSACA could develop guidance material for suggested salary ranges, adapted by number of hours, for each role. The following chart is proposed only as an example of the format this guidance material might take. NSACA would, of course, determine the actual names of roles and establish the appropriate salary guidelines.

Sample Role	Sample Salary
Aides with orientation certificate	$11,000/full-time
Activity Specialists with orientation certificate and special skill	$15,000/full-time
Group Leader with certificate or degree	$20,000/full-time
Group Leader/Administrator	$25,000 (more hours, but also more per hour)
Coordinator	$30,000/full-time

A simple guideline like this could then be applied like a template to existing roles in the field, as recommended salary policy.

Effects of Accreditation

As NSACA's accreditation unfolds, it will influence licensing requirements and funding. NSACA's new accreditation offers many opportunities to develop policies and supports that will strengthen programs. For example, employers may be interested in supporting community-wide quality improvement for all dependent care services, relying on several different accreditations: school-age, center, family child care, adult day care.

Sixteen states already pay higher rates for better quality in centers, and others may join them. In most of these states, accredited centers are paid more than centers that are only licensed. As the two new accreditations for out-of-school time programs and family child care emerge from their pilot phases, they may be added to this funding policy in these and other states.
If states will pay more for better quality, then programs receiving the higher rate can afford to pay more to their staff. That will affect the labor market, even for programs that do not receive public subsidy. Accreditation would probably increase, but programs would need help in accessing the higher rate.

Mass Accreditation is Not the Answer

In most states, programs based in public schools do not have to be licensed. No programmatic or health/safety standards are applied to them, other than school codes. An attempt to remedy this lack of standards by requiring all programs to be accredited within two years would, however, be misguided.

Pushing programs to become accredited, rather than participating in a healthy process for as long as it takes, would result in NSACA being pressured to weaken the standards. Any credential and ratios would be jeopardized, and the integrity and value of the accreditation would be destroyed. A better policy would be to establish a readiness goal that all programs had to meet in two to four years, but only those that are ready would begin to work on their accreditation.

Set of Policies for Improving Compensation

There are no quick fixes or easy answers to resolve this complex issue. Any successful strategy needs to address the issue over time and provide a package of tactics that addresses a number of issues simultaneously. Approaching from the compensation side, an example of a feasible policy package would have the following four action components:

1. Wage and benefit guidelines.
2. Tiered reimbursement rates to improve quality for children and youths.
3. Technical assistance to programs to help them achieve a higher level of quality.
4. State-funded training that counts towards degrees.

1. Wage and Benefit Guidelines

These guidelines should show a range for each credentialed role. They should be developed by government and/or by advocates. Issues include:

- linking increased compensation to increased training;
- indexing salaries by role and by level of specialized education, for equity across schools, youth development programs, and other child care;
- defining boundaries of "related fields" and content of specialized training; and
- determining the role or roles of director on the career lattice.

2. Tiered Reimbursement Rates to Improve Quality for Children and Youths

Staff retention is an element of quality, so that higher reimbursement rates would need to include strategies for retaining and rewarding higher quality in staff. Issues include:

- How many tiers? If more than two, what incentives are needed to move up?
- If accreditation is one of the tiers, how will NSACA and the state assure that the program meets the standards having to do with ratio, group size, and staff education?
- How much per tier should the rate increase to affect quality goals adequately?

- What kind of evaluation can include the voices of children and youths?

3. Technical Assistance to Programs

Issues to be addressed include:

- infrastructure development to improve capability to deliver technical assistance;
- technical assistance to administrators on strategies for quality and getting to a higher level;
- technical assistance on training and career counseling;
- technical assistance on model salary scales that reward longevity and increased specialized training;
- technical assistance for CCR&Rs on how to help parents find and identify quality (i.e., information on accreditation, information on tiered levels of quality, and ratings);
- assistance with leveraging private dollars for mini-grants; and
- technical assistance on marketing to customers (i.e., children and youths).

4. State-Funded Training that Counts Toward Degrees

Issues to be addressed are:

- training must be accessible and available;
- training must carry course credit, or be transformable to credit; and
- training content should be identified in terms of core competencies.

Summary

This paper, written for discussion, can be summed up in a few sentences. First, creating the elements of a credential is a long-term process in any community. It might take as long as 10 years. During that time, the field will continue to change, so that the final result 10 years from now is not predictable.

Second, credentialing is a compensation strategy, but it does not stand alone as the solution. Instead, it is important to create and implement a package of policy changes that adds up to a solution. One example of such a package, but not "the answer," was given above in this paper. This package was presented as one way to move in the right direction.

Third, credentialing adds a whole new level of actions for the field to take in addition to the ones identified in the past (Baden, Genser, Levine, & Seligson, 1982). There are a number of options for the field to weigh as it considers credentialing (i.e., how to create a pathway of credentialed roles, whether the credential is offered at one particular level only). These are complex issues to tackle, and some suggested policies and recommendations are offered below as a point of departure for discussion of credentialing.

A Set of Credentialing Policies for Discussion

1. NSACA would require, through accreditation, 50% percent of credentialed staff and a credentialed director in each program location by the time of re-accreditation.

2. A Group Leader, entry-level credential would be a certificate, be based in a college, carry 9 - 12 credits, and have core knowledge and competencies identified. This credential would be the minimum requirement for group leaders.

3. MOST would try to convince two-year colleges to offer an associate's degree that includes these competencies and this knowledge base and/or to grant credit for the entry certificate. Degreed group leaders would be paid more.

4. MOST would try to convince four-year colleges to articulate with two-year colleges offering an associate's degree in Out-of-School Time Programming, to grant credit for the entry certificate, and to offer coursework in greater depth on the same core knowledge and competencies.

5. Public and private funding for scholarships at any level would be promoted, especially the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® project, which has a compensation component.

6. In order to assure access to the credential, NSACA and MOST would actively engage in outreach to members of underrepresented groups.

7. The first credential would be the group leader credential at entry level. Later, that credential would also be offered at the associate's and bachelor's degree levels.

8. A credential for group leader/director would be developed soon after the establishment of the group leader credential. This credential would be of value to the full-time staff member in a small program. It would include the group leader requirements, with some additional college courses for administration, and might be offered at the associate's and bachelor's levels.

9. A credential for activities specialist, consisting of basic orientation plus evidence of specialized knowledge or skill in a particular area, would be considered. Blended roles could be developed the same way.

10. A credential for coordinators would require even stronger competencies in management, added to the basic knowledge and competencies of a group leader.

Recommendations for Discussion

Local leaders should:

- Join forces with professional development groups in their state and assure that out-of-school time program concerns are reflected in the work of those groups.
- Make sure that personnel registries or other tracking systems for training include SAC providers and administrators.
- Research early care and education director credentialing efforts to identify the set of competencies they deem to be essential. Add these additional competencies to a credential for group leader/director, if such a credential is desirable.

States should:

- Make their licensing rules more specific for out-of-school time personnel qualifications.
- Provide funding for career development in this field.
- Pay a higher rate for accredited programs.
- Encourage a gradual process for becoming accredited, with community support and assistance for readiness and facilitated group projects for accreditation.
- Support local infrastructure that brings schools and other youth-serving agencies together.

NSACA should:

- Place its stamp of approval on training programs that result in a credential.
- Discuss the role of credentialing in accreditation. Over time, what should be required by NSACA, by when?
- Encourage its members to join forces with, and to influence, other groups working on issues of credentialing and compensation.
- Promote the identification of core knowledge and competencies at its national conferences.
- Develop salary guidelines tied to levels of specialized education.
- Disseminate information on comparative state licensing policies, to stimulate change.
- Continue to emphasize a gradual process for improving quality that helps programs prepare for accreditation and then facilitates accreditation when the programs are ready.
- Continue to broaden the conceptualization of the field to encompass more kinds of programs, and other staff, all doing similar work needing comparable competencies.

The National Institute for Out-of-School Time should:

- Provide technical assistance to states and communities in the pursuit of excellence in, and further development of, out-of-school time programs.
- Engage in research and evaluation to resolve issues and to report on progress.

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Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST)

How do we make the most of out-of-school time for our nation's children? This is the question at the heart of the MOST Initiative, a multi-million dollar project supported by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (DWRD), and designed in partnership with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)* at the Wellesley Centers for Women. MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) seeks to improve the quality and availability of programming for children and youth in Boston, Chicago, and Seattle during the hours they are not in school. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time, with 20 years of action research and expertise in the field of school-age care, provides coordination and technical assistance to the Initiative.

MOST employs a **community-based, collaborative** approach toward improving the quality and quantity of out-of-school services for children and youth, especially those from low-income families. This strategy creates the opportunity to develop local capacity to provide leadership, resources and commitment to children's out-of-school time, and to develop an infrastructure capable of supporting a system of school-age care. As the infrastructure expands, strengthens, and new relationships are formed, there is potential for **systems change** to occur. The community now has the capacity to conduct planning, create partnerships and raise and expand resources to help all children access affordable, enriching opportunities during their non-school time. The multiple goals and activities of MOST are key to initiating and driving systems change that allows for long-term **sustainability**. These four concepts highlighted above—community based, collaborative, systems change, and sustainability, are the building blocks of MOST. They provide the conceptual framework and foundation for the myriad of efforts underway in all three MOST cities.

In 1994, DWRD launched the MOST Initiative by selecting cities to receive one-year planning grants. During this **planning year**, community-based coalitions developed Action Plans to address the following **national goals** for out-of-school time programs:

- Start and/or improve programs;
- Increase the numbers of children served;
- Increase professional development and in-service training opportunities for providers;
- Increase public awareness of the need for services;
- Develop resources to sustain the project's goals.

* *formerly the School-Age Child Care Project*

In each city, Action Plans were developed through an intensive collaborative process that allowed for community members to assess needs, develop strategies, and generate substantial matching funds. Three cities--**Boston, Chicago, and Seattle**--received grants in May 1995, of $1.2 million each for implementation of their three-year plan. Under the umbrella of one or more lead agencies, the MOST cities developed a governance structure to engage a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., school-age administrators and staff, city officials, parents, large youth-serving agencies, religious organizations, higher education institutions, public schools, etc.) to meet the goals of the Initiative. Although each city worked from similar goals, their action plans were quite different, reflecting the unique needs, priorities and resources of each city.

Staff at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time work closely with each community to provide technical assistance and training support. They facilitate communication and sharing of experiences between the MOST cities, and gather and disseminate information related to the Initiative at the national level. In the first phase of the Initiative, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund has supported collaborations between NIOST and two national organizations: the Wheelock College Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education to provide technical assistance in professional development, and the National School-Age Care Alliance to work on the program improvement and accreditation pilot. The Chapin Hall Center for the Study of Children is conducting a multi-year evaluation of the MOST Initiative. In the second phase, the Finance Project, based in Washington DC, received a planning grant to partner with NIOST in exploring a variety of financial strategies to help sustain the MOST Initiative in participating cities, and in other communities seeking to address similar issues.

Early findings from an ongoing evaluation of the MOST Initiative show that the three cities are making progress in their efforts to improve the quality and availability of school-age care, especially for families in low-income communities. Some early results include:

- Approximately 6,000 new school-age care spaces have been created through the initiative.
- More than $2 million in additional funds have been raised by the cities to support this work.
- Hundreds of staff have received training to improve their skills for providing care for school-age youth.
- In the three cities, the scope of services and range of programs available to families has been expanded by partnerships with park districts, schools, youth-serving organizations, cultural institutions and others.

As a result of these preliminary findings, in 1998 the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund awarded an additional $3.3 million to help Boston, Chicago, and Seattle extend their efforts to develop community-wide systems for providing before- and after-school care for 5 to 14 year olds, and to share lessons from this work with other cities.

City Accomplishments

Boston MOST: In Boston, the MOST Initiative has:

- Provided staff development opportunities through trainings, forums, a directors' support group, and a program improvement support group;
- Supported 31 SACC staff working toward an associates degree that includes the APEX Certificate in School Age Child Care;
- Taken a leading role in a Statewide SACC Professional Development Committee which is developing a statewide system of professional development that is linked to compensation;
- Increased access for low and moderate income families by 1500 slots by awarding multi-year Affordability Grants to more than 142 programs in 16 neighborhoods;
- Provided $463,000 in facilities grants to 9 programs in 1998: four expansion grants created 133 new after-school slots, and five grants supported critical facility improvements;
- Supported program start-up through an initiative to provide training, technical assistance, and start-up grant awards to elementary and middle schools; and
- Supported Americorps members working on quality improvement initiatives focused on literacy, inclusion and cultural competency, and developed and supported a team of Quality Advisors who provide technical assistance to programs working on quality improvement.

Chicago MOST: In Chicago, the MOST Initiative has:

- Provided staff development opportunities for over 900 school-age professionals through training, college courses, conferences and tuition reimbursement;
- Developed school-age/youth worker competencies to create a set of standards for working with children;
- Awarded program improvement grants to out-of-school time programs enhancing cultural and educational opportunities for more than 8,000 school-age children;
- Partnered with Chicago Park District to create 41 Park Kids programs for over 4,000 children;
- Strengthened the capacities of over 200 diverse out-of-school time providers through "Neighborhood Networking" open houses to create linkages with cultural institutions, community-based organizations and neighborhood businesses;
- Collaborated with the Illinois Facilities Fund to improve school-age program indoor environments through "makeovers" and published a space planning manual based on lessons learned;
- Implemented the Quality Improvement Project for thirteen school-age programs that includes technical assistance, training and a program improvement grant.

Seattle MOST: In Seattle, the MOST Initiative has:

- Increased program accessibility for low-income children and youth particularly from immigrant and refugee families by creating and expanding out-of-school time programs that meet their needs;
- Helped Seattle families find quality out-of-school time programs by developing a youth activities database on the Internet and distributing 35,000 printed directories listing programs by neighborhood;
- Expanded professional development options and improved skills for staff through college classes, mentor projects, community workshops and on-site training;
- Strengthened partnerships between schools and out-of-school time programs by jointly designing dedicated school-age care space and by training staff to infuse recreational reading strategies into their out-of-school time programs; and
- Raised public awareness and community involvement in supporting out-of-school time care and its positive outcomes.

Publications by the MOST Initiative

Homework Assistance and Out-of-School Time: Filling the Need, Finding a Balance

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